

## ***FWP COMMISSION AGENDA ITEM COVER SHEET***

**Meeting Date:** 08/18/2011

**Agenda Item:** Square Butte Grazing Association, Charlie Schwenke, and Winston Mitchell Access Easement

**Division:** Wildlife

**Action Needed:** Endorse Course of Action

**Time Needed on Agenda for this Presentation:** 10 minutes

### **Background**

FWP proposes to acquire a road easement totaling 19 miles through private land to associated Bureau of Land Management lands and Department of Natural Resources and Conservation State School Trust lands. The proposed road easement is located in HDs 620, 621, 680, and 690 and is associated with three landowners: Square Butte Grazing Association, Charlie Schwenke, and Winston Mitchell.

Currently, public access along the 19 miles of proposed road easement is secured annually with the private landowners through a Block Management Area contract excluding the portion of road in Blaine County. Such an agreement has been in place since 1997. The three landowners approached Region 6 staff to initiate discussions regarding an access easement and are willing to consider an easement in perpetuity.

The project would provide increased public access to over 50,000 acres of public land including portions of the BLM's Upper Missouri Breaks National Monument and BLM in the Little Rocky Mountains.

Currently, sheep hunting access into HD 680 is severely limited. The portion of the Square Butte Grazing Association easement through Spencer Cow Camp, Blaine Co. would provide public access into Cow Creek and into the Missouri River Breaks. In addition, securing these road access easements would provide hunters with permanent access to public land elk, mule deer, mountain lion, and upland game bird hunting. Since 1997, the three landowners' properties accommodate a high volume of hunter days within the Square Butte Block Management Area. The cost for the project will be determined through appraisal processes which focus on this type of acquisition to meet both landowner and FWP/public needs.

### **Public Involvement Process & Results**

There has been no public involvement to date, but it is likely that there will be tremendous support from the public once it has been endorsed by the commission.

### **Alternatives and Analysis**

The primary purpose of this purchase is to secure legal perpetual public road access across Square Butte Grazing Association, Charlie Schwenke, and Winston Mitchell properties to associated public lands. The alternative is to continue to rely on an annual Block Management Contract, recognizing that present or future landowners may choose not to continue to allow such access.

### **Agency Recommendation & Rationale**

FWP recommends approval by the FWP Commission to proceed with efforts to purchase a perpetual public road easement from Square Butte Grazing Association, Charlie Schwenke, and Winston Mitchell.

### **Proposed Motion**

I move the Commission endorse the Department's recommendation to begin negotiations to acquire a public road access easement across Square Butte Grazing Association, Charlie Schwenke, and Winston Mitchell properties to associated public lands.